

SECTIONS

News
Companies
Industry
Opinion
International
Markets
Radio
M&A Pulse

Letters to the Editor
Indicators
SENS
Archive
Corporate announcements
Subscribe
Best read

Friday, 17 June 2016

NEWS

EU seeks to drop SA citrus ban - document

Reuters



BRUSSELS - The European Commission has proposed dropping a ban on South African citrus imports to keep orange juice on Europe's breakfast tables this summer but said it could be re-imposed if shipments contain a fungal disease.

The European Union, which buys 1 billion euros (\$1.4 billion) of South African citrus exports every year, banned mainly oranges, lemons, and tangerines from South Africa late last year because of a fungal disease found in shipments.

But in a document obtained by Reuters, the Commission, which coordinates trade policy for the 28-member bloc, says a ban is not necessary. It recommends considering blocking the fruit only if the black spot disease is found in five different shipments from South Africa during the 2014 season.

The document said proper checks and tracking of fruit origin were enough to allow citrus into the EU. "The specified fruits shall be visually inspected by the responsible official body at the point of entry," it said.

EU governments will vote on Wednesday whether to extend the ban, which would block 600 000 tonnes of citrus fruit for the May-October season, potentially inflating the price of orange juice in Europe this summer and forcing South Africa to sell at lower prices elsewhere.

South Africa supplies about a third of the European Union's total citrus imports and is the main source of oranges for the juice drunk by consumers in Britain, Germany and France during Europe's summer.

Last year's ban followed the interception of 35 citrus shipments from South Africa that were contaminated with the fungal black spot disease, which growers in southern Europe fear could take hold in their citrus groves.

While harmless to humans, citrus black spot causes unsightly lesions on the fruit and leaves, reducing both harvest quality and quantity. There is no known cure, but fungicides can be used to control the spread of the disease.

'End of an industry'

The dispute comes at a sensitive time because the European Union is offering to improve the terms of its free-trade deal with South Africa in return for Pretoria's support for the trade deals that Europe is seeking with sub-Saharan Africa.

EU trade chief Karel De Gucht told South African officials during a visit to Johannesburg in November that the contaminated shipments were "serious and problematic".

South African growers say banning their citrus produce from all the European Union's countries is unfair because there are no citrus groves in northern Europe due to the colder climate, meaning there was no risk from the black spot fungal disease in places such as Britain and Germany.

"It's what we'd term an industry-ending event should we be banned out of Europe," Justin Chadwick, head of the Citrus Grower's Association of Southern Africa, told South African media earlier this year.

The EU's ban last year was largely symbolic because it came at the end of South Africa's season. But the European Union's food safety watchdog said in February there was a risk of the fungal disease taking hold in Europe's estimated 500,000 hectares of citrus groves.

EU farm union Copa-Cogeca wrote to EU Health Commissioner Tonio Borg this month to call for an immediate ban from any South African farms found to be contaminated with the black spot disease. Citrus-producing Spain, Italy and Greece support such a measure but face resistance from northern European nations.

"We want measures for 2014," the group's head Pekka Pesonen said. "We faced a very high risk of contamination last season and we cannot repeat it this year."



FOLLOW US

MORE IN THIS SECTION

Hanna Ziady

Defencex investors given a second chance to reclaim money

And this time the requirements are less onerous.

Prinesha Naidoo

South Africans looking to buy foreign citizenship increasing

Malta, Cyprus and Portugal remain favourites.

Antoinette Slabbert

Court stays Tshwane R950m payment to PEU

City has to hand over crucial documents.

OPINION

Ingé Lamprecht

Am I liable for interest tax?

Reader's question answered.

Andrea Felsted, Bloomberg

Steinhoff strikes again

Third time lucky?

How does your salary compare with Albert Einstein's pay?

PSG Asset Management: Why we have been adding banks to our funds

YESTERDAY'S BEST READ

Antoinette Slabbert

Urgent court bid to stop R950m payment to PEU

Tshwane won't give an undertaking to refrain from paying.

The JSE's most popular mid-cap stocks

Why Allan Gray is concerned about London property prices

Hanna Ziady

And this time the requirements are less onerous.



SECTIONS

News

Companies

Industry

Opinion

International

Markets

Radio

M&A Pulse

The incredible story of Alibaba

Patrick Cairns

A digital phenomenon.



Copyright | Terms and Conditions | Privacy Policy | Contact | Subscribe | To advertise



Price and trade data source: JSE Ltd.
All other statistics calculated by Profile Data.

Letters to the Editor

Indicators

SENS

Archive

Corporate announcements

Subscribe

Best read

